

Petersen takes charge at Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 01 October 2013 16:07 -

Bryan Petersen is technically the "interim" head coach of the Kirkwood men's basketball team, but there's no doubt who was in charge Tuesday when the Eagles began preseason drills at Johnson Hall.

Doug Wagemester stepped aside as the head coach after last season and Petersen, one of his assistants, was quickly named to lead the team this season. Wagemester, the school's athletic director, will decide at some point whether he wants to coach the team again next year or not.

In the meantime, Petersen is running the club on his own, although Wagemester's office is just a few steps away if he wants any advice.

Petersen, 26, played for Wagemester at Kirkwood and was a starting point guard at Iowa State. He knows the system and was fully in charge Tuesday.

"He seems totally in control," said Kirkwood point guard Taylor Olson, a sophomore from Cedar Rapids Jefferson. "He doesn't seem nervous at all. He's doing a great job so far.

"I knew he could do it from last year, just how he works with the guards and everything else. He'll do a great job."

Petersen helped recruit many of the players on this year's team and knows the personnel. The Eagles have only three sophomores on the 17-man squad, so there's not a lot of experience.

Olson, J.C. Fuller and Jalen Currie played for Kirkwood last year, but everybody else is starting fresh.

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"I think we have some talent in the system," said Petersen. "The biggest thing is getting it all together and getting them on the same page."

Kirkwood will play three exhibition games at the Juco Jam at the University of Northern Iowa this Saturday, so the picture could clarify after the Eagles face Southeast, Sauk Valley and Rochester in Cedar Falls.

Henry Uwadiae, a 6-foot-11 center from Nigeria, is playing for the Eagles this season after taking a redshirt year last season. He originally committed to Wichita State, but that changed and he committed to Marshall University last week.

Chris Ward, a 6-foot-6, 265-pound center from Springfield, Mo., has joined the club as a freshman, giving the Eagles another big body in the middle. All told, there are seven players in the 6-foot-5 to 6-foot-6 range who can help with the rebounding. There also are several point guards and shooting guards.

"We have a lot of talented guards and we brought in a lot of talented posts," said Olson. "So we've got size and we've got a lot of talent."

"You can have as much talent as you want, but if you don't play together it doesn't mean anything. I think all of our guys are unselfish, so I think it will come together. I think we can do good things this year."

Olson turned down a scholarship offer from Idaho State last spring to play for Kirkwood again. He plans to keep in touch with Idaho State this year, as well as pursuing other offers that may come his way.

Petersen thinks the strengths of this year's squad could be depth and outside shooting. He also thinks the Eagles could be a good rebounding team. "I like our group," he said.

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Petersen, a point guard himself in college, likes having an experienced point guard like Olson on the squad to help put things together.

"He has a pretty good feel for what I want and how I want things done," said Petersen. "It is a good feeling to have him back."

As far as being the head coach - interim or not - Petersen said there's a lot more to the job than most people realize. "You always have to look ahead," he said. "As the head coach, you can't have a bad day."

Kirkwood finished 19-13 last season, but Olson thinks the club will do better than that this time.

"Nationals," said Olson. "That's what we're shooting for. I think we can do it."

The Eagles have five players from the area with Olson (Jefferson), Matt Lassen (Linn-Mar), Myzeah Batie-Gaddy (Iowa City West), Austin Swank (Iowa City West) and Joseph Weeks (Solon).

2013-14 ROSTER

SOPHOMORES

Jalen Currie, 6-5, Milwaukee

J.C. Fuller, 6-3, Sioux City

Taylor Olson, 6-2, Cedar Rapids Jefferson

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FRESHMEN

Jamaree Atwater, 6-2, Moline, Ill.
Myzeah Batie-Gaddy, 6-5, Iowa City West
Brayton Bennett, 6-6, Wildwood, Mo.
Tyler Bussell, 6-2, Brookline, Mo.
Kenny Ejim, 6-5, Brampton, Ontario
Dominique Gibson, 6-0, Macon, Ga.
Matt Lassen, 6-4, Linn-Mar
Aaron Lawton, 6-0, Westfield, Ind.
Zach Snowden, 6-6, Joliet, Ill.
Joseph Tagarelli, 6-5, Bayside, Wis.
Henry Uwadiae, 6-11, Benin City, Nigeria
Chris Ward, 6-6, Springfield, Mo.
Joseph Weeks, 6-5, Solon